

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5042

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 15198

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR, IT

SUBJ: CIVAIR: GOI THREAT TO PAN AM FLIGHTS BEYOND ROME

REF: (A) STATE 204910; (B) STATE 208161

1. DURING CALL ON PIETROSANTO (MFA) ON OTHER MATTERS, PIETROSANTO SAID THAT MFA HAS IN PREPARATION NOTE VERBALE THAT WILL STATE THAT PAN AM WILL HAVE EXCEEDED CEILING OF 77,040 SEATS BY AUGUST 27 OR 28. PIETROSANTO MADE CLEAR THAT TRANSIT PASSENGERS WERE INCLUDED IN THIS CALCULATION. EMBOFF RESPONDED ALONG LINES PARA 4 FREF (A), I.E. THAT USG POSITION IS THAT B-747 LEVEL FILED FOR AND APPROVED IN 1977 SHOULD BE THE FREEZE LEVEL; THAT USG, IN SPIRIT OF COMPROMISE, ACCEPTED LIMITATION AT B-707 LEVEL, BUT ONLY FOR FIFTH FREEDOM PASSENGERS.

2. EMBOFF HAS ADVISED ROME PAN AM MANAGER OF FOREGOING. HE NOTED THAT SHOULD GOI ACTUALLY FORCE PASSENGERS TO DEBAORD AFTER AUG 31, (A) THIRD AND FOURTH FREEDOM PASSENGERS PRESUMABLY WOULD BE INVOLVED AND (B) OTHER AIRLINES HAVE INDICATED INSUFFICIENT SPACE AVAILABLE TO TAKE NUMBERS OF PAN AM PASSENGERS THAT COULD BE AFFECTED TUNIL AROUND SEPT. 8 OR 9. ACCORDING TO PAN AM'S LATEST CALCULATIONS OF PASSENGER BOOKINGS, PAN AM
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NOT LIKELY EXCEED 77,040 LIMITE BY MORE THAN 6 PERCENT (VICE 17 PERCENT REPORTED REF (B)) OR ABOUT 4,715 PASSENGERS. THE 77,040 CEILING DEFINITELY WOULD NOT BE REACHED IN AUGUST, BUT SOMETIME IN OCTOBER.

3. COMMENT. EMBOFF DOES NOT EXPECT RECEIVE MFA NOTE BEFORE AUGUST 21 AT EARLIEST. ON BASIS EARLIER CONVERSATION

WITH PIETROSANTO, EMBOFF BELIEVES ITALIAN CIVAIR AUTHORITIES
ACTUALLY DISCOUNTING FROM 77,040 SEAT CEILING BY APPLYING
1977 SEAT FACTOR OR SOME "REPRESENTATIVE" SEAT FACTOR.
IF THEY USE 1977 SEATS SOLD (INCLUDING TRANSITS) ON BEYOND
ROME SECTORS THAT WOULD PRODUCE DISCOUNTED
CEILING OF 53,763 SEATS INSTEAD OF 77,040.

4. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS HAZARDOUS TO GUESS WHAT GOI
INTENTIONS ARE, EMBASSY'S BEST CURRENT GUESS IS THAT GOI
WILL APPLY MAXIMUM PRESSURE TO INDUCE PAN AM TO LIMIT
PASSENGER BOOKINGS, BUT WILL NOT ACTUALLY FORCE DEBOARDING
OF PASSENGERS FOR FOLLOWING REASONS. PRESUMABLY GOOD
CASE CAN BE MADE THAT THERE IS INSUFFICIENT CAPACITY
BETWEEN ITALY AND MID-EAST AS INDICATED BY PAN AM'S HIGH SEAT
FACTORS IN JULY AND AUGUST (WE ASSUME ALITALIA'S SEAT FACTORS
ON SAME SECTORS MUST BE IN SAME REGION). GOI UNLIKELY INITIATE
MAJOR CIVAIR CONFLICT WITH U.S SO CLOSE TO TIME OF CORONATION
NEW POPE AND RELATED TRAVEL OF MANY HIGH RANKING DELEGATIONS.
GOI STRATEGY PROBABLY IS TO BUILD HISTROY OF NEAR CRISES
FOLLOWED BY SEEMINGLY REASONABLE FURTHER CONCESSIONS ON THEIR PART
SO THEY CAN PRESENT "OVER-WHELMING" CASE DURING NEXT CONSULTATION
THAT CAPACITY CONTROL MECHANISM EMBODIED IN CURRENT BILATERAL
CIVAIR AGREEMENT SIMPLY INSUFFICIENT.HOLMES

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